

Cochituate Rail Trail Natick Update

Issue #7
Fall 2014

A community newsletter from the Natick Cochituate Rail Trail Advisory Committee on the proposed Cochituate Rail Trail. Visit our website at www.natickma.gov/crt

What is the Cochituate Rail Trail?

The Cochituate Rail Trail is a proposed 4-mile path and linear park connecting Natick Center with Saxonville in Framingham, with a spur to the Natick Mall, using the former Saxonville Branch. This line carried freight until 2006, and was last used for passenger rail service in the 1930s.

When it is completed, the CRT will connect Natick and Framingham with a 4 mile trail for walkers, bikers, commuters and strollers. The CRT will serve thousands of residents, many large and small employers, Lake Cochituate State Park, Camp Arrowhead, the Natick Soldier Systems Center, the Natick Mall, Natick Center and the Natick Center MBTA Station and the Saxonville neighborhood.

The Town has made good progress in the last year on this long-term project, with more to come. ■■■.

The CRT Committee: at work for you!

The Cochituate Rail Trail Advisory Committee is appointed by the Natick Board of Selectmen. Our nine members include five citizens at large, along with representatives of the Selectmen, Community Development Department, Recreation and Parks Commission and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Members serve for three-year terms. Meetings are public, and are posted in Town Hall and at www.natickma.gov. ■■■

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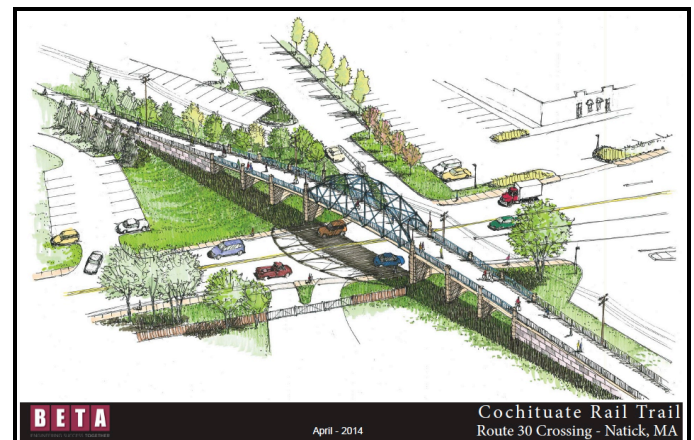
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Major CRT Design Milestones

In September 2014, the Town and its engineering firm, BETA Group, will submit a "25% design" to MassDOT. This design will lay out the features and specifications of the CRT. If this design is approved, MassDOT will then hold a public hearing in 2015 for review and comment by the community, including abutters and the many residents and businesses in surrounding neighborhoods. This hearing will be widely publicized.

Some design features include:

- A bridge at the Framingham/Natick town line over Route 30 will provide a safe crossing that avoids the congested Speen/30 intersection



Route 30 Bridge Concept

- A replacement bridge across Route 9 to provide increased vehicle clearance
- A ramp up to street level in Natick Center to connect to the MBTA Station, which is in the early stages of design for a modern facility
- Grade-level crossings at Kansas and Lake Streets to provide safe passage for pedestrians on North Main St. (Route 27) and CRT users
- 12 foot wide paved surface
- Scenic overlooks on Lake Cochituate
- Gated or open access to abutters, if desired

Later design work will refine these and other elements of the project. ■■■

CSX negotiations

The Town is negotiating with CSX Transportation, the owner of the Right of Way (ROW) to acquire +/- 21 acres of land. The parties have completed a jointly funded appraisal for the property. The Town and CSX may finalize a deal when the CRT is at the 75% design, which may be in late 2015, depending on how soon the design moves forward. MassDOT design approval is needed to qualify the project for construction funding. The Town hopes to acquire the ROW using a combination of conservation funds, state grants and state bond funds. ■■■

Building the CRT

The CRT has preliminary MassDOT approval, the first step in construction. A 2019 funding date is a “placeholder,” as Natick must acquire the ROW and complete design work. Rail trail construction funding is competitive and requires state and town support and available state and federal funds. ■■■

No trespassing

The CSX ROW in Natick is private property; the Town of Natick does not have authority to permit access by individuals on the property. CSX pays property taxes on the land they own in Natick.

The Town has installed barriers to prevent motorized vehicles and trash disposal. If you observe dumping or other illegal activity on the ROW, please report it to the Natick Police. ■■■

Framingham CRT news

The Framingham section of the CRT is nearing completion and is scheduled to open by 2015. This 1.5 mile section extends from School Street in Saxonville to Route 30 at the Natick border. The web site www.crtrail.org has more information about the Framingham section of the CRT. ■■■

Natick Town Meeting actions

Natick Town Meeting and other town boards have consistently supported the CRT project. Between 2006 and 2011, Town Meeting approved the use of \$500,000 in mitigation funds from General Growth (Natick Mall) to be expended under the direction of the Selectmen and Conservation Commission. Fall 2014 Town Meeting will consider mitigation and state funding to help complete design work. ■■■

CRT work to date

Since 2006, the Town and the CRT Advisory Committee have undertaken a range of reports, studies, services and public outreach with the support of the Board of Selectmen and the Conservation Commission. Studies and reports are available at www.natickma.gov/crt.

These products include...

- several community meetings
- an abutter survey
- a conceptual design study
- an alternative transit/recreational use study
- wetlands research
- topographic survey
- multiple appraisals
- title research
- gates and barriers
- 25% design

The primary remaining services to be funded by the Town are the 75% and 100% design, including various bridge studies required by MassDOT as part of design work, as well as the 25% public hearing to be conducted by MassDOT. ■■■

Contact the CRT Advisory Committee

The CRT Advisory Committee holds public meetings about once a month or as work requires. Visit www.natickma.gov/crt for more information, or email crt@natickma.org, or call the Selectmen's office at (508) 647-6410.

The CRT Advisory Committee web page includes

- CRT reports and studies
- Maps
- Frequently Asked Questions & Answers
- Meeting minutes
- Links to other projects and resources
- Committee directory
- Contact information

Please contact the CRT committee with any questions. Your participation is welcome! ■■■
